



In the last decade of the previous century, on this spot at the mouth of Provo Canyon, a scientific experiment was developed that brought an alternating current of electric power into use for mining purposes many miles from here. L. L. Nunn, an associate of a company in Telluride, Colorado, was the instigator of this revolutionary concept. From the success of this development came the Telluride power plant, later to be purchased by Utah Power and Light as this company acquired the Provo franchise in 1912.

Provo-Owned Power

As early as 1931 some citizens were raising the issue of the advisability of investigating municipally-owned power for Provo. Several informal meetings were held in which this issue was discussed. By 1932 Mayor Jess Ellertson became convinced that a more careful study should be made and appointed Elmer A. Jacob, then city engineer, to gather objective data that would provide some evidence on which a decision may be made. These data were gathered from approximately a hundred cities having municipal power at that time, and some cities were visited by Mr. Jacob in company with other city officials.

By 1933 the engineer had accumulated what was believed to be adequate information and submitted such data-supporting evidence to Mayor Ellertson and other city officials justifying city-owned power. A citizens' committee was appointed with Dr. Hugh M. Woodward, Brigham

Young University professor, as chairman. Additional studies were made and added visits to other cities were completed. In 1934, Mayor A. Smoot, successor to Ellertson, appointed an additional committee to conduct further study. Sufficient skepticism by certain Provo citizens and probability of financing such a venture delayed aggressive action for several months.

Mark Anderson, who later became mayor, and a strong advocate of municipally owned power, in 1935 was appointed chairman of a power plant committee. In 1936, following Mark Anderson's election as mayor of Provo, he at once began active effort to make the plant become an actual reality. Signatures of 2,383 families, approximately 75% of all residing in Provo, signed a statement in which they agreed to take electrical energy from a municipal plant was established.

The city commission, at that time, consisting of Mayor Mark Anderson, J. P. McGuire, and Jesse Haws, negotiated an agreement with John Nunn and Company in which through a bonding program the plant could be erected, equipped, and prepared for operation.

Within the same year (1936) the city commission entered into an agreement with the Ulen Contracting Corporation to design and supervise the steam generating plant and distribution system.

The proposed bond election was held October 31, 1936, and received approval to the commission to proceed to finance the anticipated municipal power plant.

The Utah Power and Light Company formerly had owned a franchise to furnish Provo with power. This issue of possibly changing to public ownership of power was debated enthusiastically for months. In spite of the fact that a large per cent of Provo resident owners had agreed to support municipal power ownership, the Utah Power and Light Company actively opposed such action. With such opposition this issue continued for weeks and weeks. A series of lawsuits came to the courts. In December 1937, the Utah Supreme Court validated the bonding program and constitution ordinances, but the privately-owned power company extended the issue to the United States Supreme Court for final settlement. This high court on October 17, 1938, made a decision supporting the earlier decision of the Utah Court, thereby terminating the legal issue. At that time Provo municipal power hastily became a reality.

The city commission formerly had promised to appoint a non-partisan, non-political board to have much of the control of the entire facility. Hamilton Calder, Dr. Vasco Tanner, Clarence Harmon, and R. C. Adams, Provo citizens, were appointed to the board at that time. Provo City took over its own company in April, 1940.

Substantial additions to the plant facility have been made from time to time in order to supply Provo's growth in residences, businesses, the industrial institutions, and the city's own expansion programs with adequate power.